

*J. Raptor Res.* 22(2):65

© 1988 The Raptor Research Foundation, Inc.

### INCIDENTAL CAPTURE OF A NORTHERN HARRIER (*Circus cyaneus*) IN A MAMMAL TRAP

RALPH D. GODFREY, JR. AND ALAN M. FEDYNICH

On 28 December 1985, an adult-female Northern Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*) was captured in a box-trap (Tomahawk #108). The trap was set on a stream side trail to capture Raccoons (*Procyon lotor*) preying on ducks caught in banding traps. A Green-winged Teal (*Anas crecca*) carcass was used for bait. We have found no records of harrier captures in live traps of this type.

During the 24 hr prior to the Northern Harrier capture, temp ranged from mid-teens to upper 50s. There had been a full moon the two previous nights. No snow was on the ground.

The Northern Harrier was captured at Caprock Feedlot, approximately 10 km SW of Bovina, Parmer Co., Texas (34°20'N 102°25'W). Available wetland habitat where harriers were observed quartering for prey included feedlot-effluent lagoons and an intermittent stream with pools of permanent water. The location is utilized extensively by wintering waterfowl (Fedynich 1987) and experiences recurrent waterfowl epizootics (Wallace et al. 1986; Fedynich and Godfrey 1988). Consequently, waterfowl carcasses provide an easily accessible source of food for scavengers.

Previous reports have documented harriers opportunely feeding on both live waterfowl (Schipper et al. 1975; Godfrey and Fedynich 1987) and waterfowl carcasses (Errington and Breckenridge 1936; Blohm et al. 1980). Our observation further documents opportunistic use of carrion as food in the Northern Harrier diet.

Throughout the winter, Northern Harriers commonly were observed quartering for prey. Northern Harriers may be attracted to sites that have large waterfowl concentrations, thereby increasing their chances of preying on waterfowl infected with *Pasturella multocida*. Morbidity and mortality from *P. multocida* has been reported in several endemic scavengers (Rosen and Morse 1958; Zinkl et al. 1977; Taylor and Pence 1981). However, the effects of Northern Harrier scavenging on carcasses infected with *P. multocida* are uncertain and further study is indicated.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors thank E. G. Bolen, D. B. Pence, and J. F. Bergan for reviewing this manuscript. Funding was provided by the Caesar Kleberg Foundation for Wildlife Conservation. This is Contribution No. T-9-520, College of Agricultural Sciences, Texas Tech University.

#### LITERATURE CITED

- BLOHM, R. J., F. VAN DYKE AND B. C. LIVEZEY. 1980. Marsh Hawks feeding on waterfowl. *Wilson Bull.* 92: 251-252.
- ERRINGTON, P. L. AND W. J. BRECKENRIDGE. 1936. Food habits of Marsh Hawks in the glaciated prairie region of north-central United States. *Am. Midl. Nat.* 17:831-848.
- FEDYNICH, A. M. 1987. Interlake movements of wintering waterfowl on the Southern High Plains. M.S. Thesis. Texas Tech Univ., Lubbock, TX. 133 pp.
- FEDYNICH, A. M. AND R. D. GODFREY, JR. 1988. Waterfowl mortality on the Southern High Plains of Texas. *Southwest. Nat.* 33:(In press).
- GODFREY, R. D., JR. AND A. M. FEDYNICH. 1987. Northern Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*) predation on wintering waterfowl. *Raptor Res.* 21:72-73.
- ROSEN, M. N. AND E. E. MORSE. 1958. An interspecies chain in a fowl cholera epizootic. *Calif. Fish and Game* 45:51-56.
- SCHIPPER, W. J. A., L. S. BUURMA AND PH. BOSSENBROCK. 1975. Comparative study of hunting behavior of wintering Hen Harriers (*Circus cyaneus*) and Marsh Harriers (*Circus aeruginosus*). *Ardea* 63:1-29.
- TAYLOR, T. T. AND D. B. PENCE. 1981. Avian cholera in common Crows, *Corvus brachyrhynchos*, from the central Texas Panhandle. *J. Wildl. Dis.* 17:511-514.
- WALLACE, B. M., D. B. PENCE AND E. G. BOLEN. 1986. Historical survey of waterfowl diseases in playa lakes region. Final Report, Contract 14-16-0002-84-911. Texas Tech Univ. and U.S. Fish and Wildl. Serv., Lubbock. 67 pp.
- ZINKL, J. G., N. DEY, J. M. HYLAND, J. J. HURT AND K. L. HEDDLESTON. 1977. An epornitic of avian cholera in waterfowl and common Crows in Phelps County, Nebraska, in the spring, 1975. *J. Wildl. Dis.* 13:194-198.

Department of Range and Wildlife Management, P.O. Box 4169, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, TX 79409.

Received 27 January 1988; accepted 26 April 1988